



Press Release

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NAVY EXTENDS PUBLIC COMMENT PERIOD FOR DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

The U.S. Navy has extended the public comment period for the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) to evaluate the potential environmental effects that may result from the transition of Expeditionary Electronic Attack (VAQ) squadrons at Naval Air Station (NAS) Whidbey Island, Oak Harbor, Washington, from the aging EA-6B Prowler aircraft to the newer EA-18G Growler aircraft.

In response to requests from elected officials, and in order to ensure everyone in the community has ample opportunity to provide input into this document, the Navy has extended the public comment period until August 31. The original deadline for public comment was August 13. Public input is very important in order for the Navy to fully understand community concerns and relevant issues. Individuals interested in the project are strongly encouraged to provide their comments on the document.

There are two distinct VAQ communities: the Carrier Air Wing (CVW) Fleet VAQ squadrons and the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons. Each community has similar missions but differ in where they deploy (onboard aircraft carriers for the Fleet VAQ squadrons vs. land based VAQ squadrons). Expeditionary VAQ squadrons are not required to conduct field carrier landing practice (FCLP) training because they do not deploy on aircraft carriers. As a result, the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons, unlike the Fleet VAQ squadrons, do not train at outlying landing field (OLF) Coupeville.

A printed copy and an electronic copy of the Draft EA are available for public review in the Oak Harbor Library, 1000 SE Regatta Dr., Oak Harbor, WA and the La Conner Regional Library, 614 Morris St., La Conner, WA. Printed copies are now also available at the Coupeville Library, 788 Alexander St., Coupeville, WA and the Anacortes Public Library, 1220 10th St., Anacortes, WA. The Draft EA is also available online at:

- NAS Whidbey Island web site:

<http://www.cnic.navy.mil/Whidbey/OperationsAndManagement/EnvironmentalSupport/index.htm>

- Naval Facilities Engineering Command Northwest web site:
https://portal.navfac.navy.mil/portal/page/portal/navfac/NAVFAC_WW_PP/NAVFAC_EFANW_PP

Comments may be emailed to: Whdb_naswi_pao@navy.mil or may be mailed to:

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island
Public Works Department
Environmental Division
1115 W. Lexington St.
Oak Harbor, WA 98278

This Draft EA analyzes the potential effects of the Navy proposal to transition the VAQ squadrons at NAS Whidbey Island from the EA-6B Prowler to the EA-18G Growler in the 2012-2014 timeframe. The proposed action includes:

- Retaining the existing Expeditionary VAQ mission capabilities at NAS Whidbey Island.
- Performing the in-place transition of three existing Expeditionary VAQ squadrons homebased at NAS Whidbey Island from the older EA-6B aircraft to the newer EA-18G aircraft.
- Potentially relocating one Reserve Expeditionary VAQ EA-6B squadron from Joint Base Andrews to NAS Whidbey Island and transitioning from the older EA-6B aircraft to the newer EA-18G aircraft.
- Adding up to 11 EA-18G aircraft to the Fleet Replacement Squadron (FRS) at NAS Whidbey Island to support the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons.
- Modifying certain facilities at Ault Field to provide functional support to the new aircraft type and a modest increase in personnel to support the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons.

Under the proposed action, each Expeditionary VAQ squadron would increase by one additional aircraft. Each existing Expeditionary VAQ EA-6B squadron consists of four aircraft; but after transition, the Expeditionary VAQ EA-18G squadrons would consist of five aircraft each. In addition, the existing FRS (VAQ-129) would receive additional aircraft to support the Expeditionary VAQ squadrons.

The primary types of mission training and readiness requirements for the EA-18G Growler are nearly identical to those for the EA-6B Prowler. There would be no change in the training program that would cause changes to the types of flight operations flown by the current Expeditionary VAQ squadrons (arrivals, departures, or pattern operations); the locations of flight operations (flight tracks over land or water); or the current ratio of daytime to nighttime flight operations at Ault Field.

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